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Paper Shows Promise, Risks of Trans-Cranial Stimulation Treatment for Psychiatric Disorders

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – A new paper published online in the American Journal of Psychiatry Friday, Feb. 24, finds that a new type of stimulation in psychiatry has promise, but also potential pitfalls, and shows a need for more high-quality studies.

Low-intensity transcranial electrical current stimulation, or tCS, is a form of neurostimulation that uses a low power current delivered to the brain.

“This is the first comprehensive review of low-current stimulation in psychiatry,” said Dr. Noah Philip, a psychiatrist and researcher at the Providence VA Medical Center, lead author of the paper. “Low current stimulation has the potential to revolutionize how we deliver non-invasive brain stimulation through small, portable devices, but there are risks, and we want to help clinicians and researchers understand this rapidly growing field.”

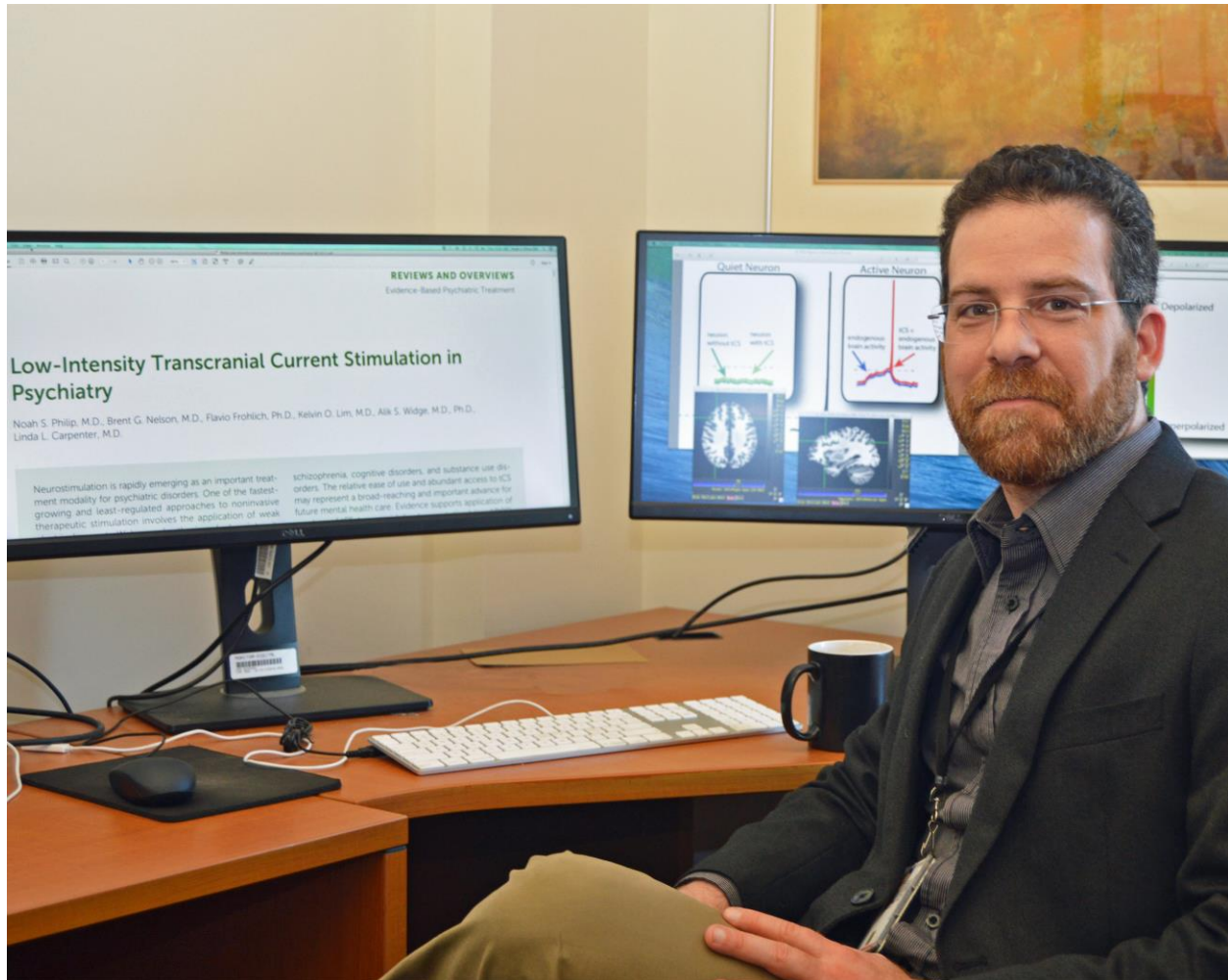
The review supports application of one type of tCS for major depression: transcranial direct current stimulation, known as tDCS. However, tDCS devices are not approved for treating medical disorders, evidence was inconclusive for other therapeutic uses, and use is associated with both physical and psychiatric risks. The complete paper can be found on the American Journal of Psychiatry’s Psychiatry Online website at:

<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.ajp.2017.16090996>.

“If eventually proven safe and effective, the ease of use and accessibility of the devices could render tCS a broad-reaching and important advance in mental health care, both for Veterans and the general population,” concluded Philip.

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Dr. Noah Philip, psychiatrist and researcher at the Providence VA Medical Center, is the lead author of a new paper published online in the American Journal of Psychiatry Friday, Feb. 24, which finds that low-intensity transcranial electrical current stimulation, known as tCS, has promise in psychiatry, but also potential pitfalls, and shows a need for more high-quality studies. (Providence VA Medical Center photo by Kimberley DiDonato)

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